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ABSTRACT

This booklet on professional development is the seventh is a series of booklets available from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory on current topics. The first section defines effective professional development. The next section examines what has been learned about professional development. Next, principles of high quality professional development are discussed. The following sections discuss presents some guiding questions for selecting professional development activities; lessons learned from adult learning theory; finding time for professional development (restructuring the school calendar, using permanent substitutes, and scheduling common planning time); what makes professional development ineffective; and some alternatives to short-term, one-size-fits-all workshops (collaborative or action research, study groups, staff retreats, scoring student work samples, planning or work days, school visits, and networks organized around specific content areas). The booklet concludes that effective professional development is intensive and sustained; it occurs through collaborative planning and implementation; and it engages teachers in opportunities that promote continuous inquiry and improvement that are relevant to local sites. The booklet presents descriptions of seven diverse professional development programs, all of which seek to actively involve teachers in effective professional development. (Contains 18 references.) (SM)

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HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

JUNE 1998

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KIT PEIXOTTO

JENNIFER FAGER

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FOREWORD

This booklet is the seventh in a series of "hot topic" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. These reports briefly address current educational concerns and issues as indicated by requests for information that come to the Laboratory from the Northwest region and beyond. Each booklet contains an explanation of the topic's importance, a sampling of how Northwest schools are addressing the issue, suggestions for adapting these ideas to schools, selected references, and contact information.

One objective of the series is to foster a sense of community and connection among educators. Another objective is to increase awareness of current education-related themes and concerns. Each booklet will give practitioners a glimpse of how fellow educators are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success in certain areas. The goal of the series is to give educators current, reliable, and useful information on topics that are important to them.

Other titles in the series include:

- Service Learning in the Northwest Region
- Tutoring: Strategies for Successful Learning
- Scheduling Alternatives: Options for Student Success
- Grade Configuration: Who Goes Where?
- Alternative Schools: Approaches for Students at Risk
- All Students Learning: Making It Happen In Your School

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Introduction

Every state in the Northwest is currently involved in reform efforts to improve students' progress toward reaching high academic standards. Practitioners and policymakers are grappling with the challenges of implementing a variety of curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies intended to support these standards and goals. To make such reform a reality, there is a growing realization that effective and meaningful professional development opportunities are critical to the successful implementation of any change agenda. Fortunately, a large body of research is available to guide decisions regarding the selection, design, and implementation of effective professional development.

What is Effective Professional Development?

Is an effective professional development activity one that is rated positively by participants in terms of satisfaction with the experience (often called the "happiness quotient")? Most would agree that the standard must be much higher. Many educators are now advocating a direct link between the professional development experience and an observable impact in the classroom before the term "effective" can be applied. Little (1997) suggests that the "test of effective professional development is whether teachers and other educators come to know more about their subjects, their students, and their practice, and to make informed use of what they know." Today, the call for establishing a link between a teacher's professional development experience and a change in the classroom that ultimately translates into improved student learning and performance is gaining strength.

What Have We Learned About Professional Development?

The research base on professional development has grown significantly in the past 20 years. In 1957, only about 50 studies on the topic were cited by the authors of the *56th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (NSSE). A current search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database since 1978 produced more than 5,600 citations containing professional development as a subject heading.

In a 1989 meta-analysis of existing research and the relevant literature, Sparks and Loucks-Horsley described five effective models of staff development and identified the following characteristics of effective professional development practice:

- Activities are conducted in school settings and linked to other schoolwide improvement efforts
- Teachers are actively involved in planning, setting goals, and selecting activities
- Self-instruction is emphasized and a variety of "differentiated training opportunities" are offered
- Ongoing support and resources are provided
- Training is concrete and includes ongoing feedback, supervised trials, and assistance on request

Research into effective professional development consistently examines implementation of new teaching strategies and behaviors. Joyce and Showers (1996) note that "in the 1970s, evaluations of staff development that focused on teaching strategies and curriculum revealed that as few as 10 percent of the participants implemented what they had learned." In a 1987 synthesis

of the research, Showers, Joyce, and Bennett examined the conditions necessary to change teachers' practice. They proposed a combination of theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback and found that sustained practice was a critical element. "For a complex model of teaching, we estimate that about 25 teaching episodes during which the new strategy is used are necessary before all the conditions of transfer are achieved" (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987). More recently, a report by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory notes, "It took 13-14 months to turn the teachers around" in a professional development effort that involved changing science teachers' instructional approach from one focused on science as definition, facts, and theories, to one that used an exploratory process to engage students in activities to develop understanding of science concepts (National Network of Eisenhower Regional Consortia and National Clearinghouse [NNERC], 1997).

Principles of High-Quality Professional Development

The critical role played by professional development in any attempt to attain the goals of educational reform has been recognized and advocated at the national level. President Bush and the nation's governors cited professional development for teachers as one of the original six education goals adopted in 1989 (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL], 1994). Goal Four states that, "By the year 2000, the nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continuous improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century."

To further delineate actions in support of this goal, the U.S. Department of Education's Professional Development Team identified 10 principles of high-quality professional development to serve as guidelines to both professional development providers and recipients. These principles reflect and embody what research identifies as best practice for professional development opportunities (Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI], 1997).

High-quality professional development:

1. Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community
2. Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement
3. Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community

4. Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership
5. Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards
6. Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools
7. Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development
8. Requires substantial time and other resources
9. Is driven by a coherent long-term plan
10. Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts

Some Guiding Questions for Selecting Professional Development Activities

When considering a particular professional development activity, the following questions serve as a set of criteria for determining the potential effectiveness of the experience. While all professional development activities may not meet each of these criteria, the potential for success increases with each positive response.

Does the professional development activity:

- Reflect school and/or district priorities?
- Provide ongoing technical support during the implementation stage?
- Have institutional support for implementation (time and resources)?
- Provide a means for determining the impact on student learning and performance?
- Reflect current understanding of best practice for adult learners?
- Encourage teachers to be active, investigative, reflective practitioners?

Lessons from Adult Learning Theory

Just as effective classroom practices are those that reflect the growing knowledge base on how children learn, effective professional development experiences incorporate best practice from adult learning theory. We know that adults bring a history of previous learning and knowledge to any professional development activity. These past experiences affect their attitudes and beliefs. Professional development is most effective when it incorporates, recognizes, and validates these previous experiences.

Like children, adults have varying styles of learning. Professional development activities that attend to a variety of learning modalities will be most effective. Active participation is a key element that must be balanced with the realities of limited time and the need to efficiently convey information. However, sacrificing an engaging, hands-on approach for a more didactic, telling experience often results in a less effective experience.

Adults are motivated by practical applications and learning that is relevant to their own situations. This is particularly true for teachers struggling to juggle the multitude of demands on their time. Professional development will be most effective when it provides for direct application to the classroom. Teachers are busy, preoccupied, and always juggling a variety of demands for their attention. They appreciate professional development that is well-planned, sets reasonable expectations and goals, and is efficiently delivered (Peixotto & Palmer, 1994).

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Finding Time for Professional Development

"Teachers, researchers, and policymakers consistently indicate that the greatest challenge to implementing effective professional development is lack of time" (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). Effective professional development is intensive and sustained—two conditions that require a significant amount of time. In the past, professional development activities have often been scheduled after school or at other times when students traditionally are not in school. While providing teachers with stipends or other methods of compensation for attending professional development activities held in the evening, on weekends, or during the summer are common practices, a number of school districts are also exploring more creative ways to provide teachers with the quality time necessary for effective professional development experiences (Corcoran, 1995). Following are some ideas for alternatives to traditional uses of time:

- **Restructuring the school calendar** to periodically release students and thus allow teachers to participate in professional development activities during the regular school day is an effective option some districts have adopted. For example, elementary schools have established an early-release schedule on Wednesdays, allowing students to leave school several hours before the normal dismissal time and thus freeing the entire school staff to be involved in a variety of professional development sessions. The daily schedule on the remaining days can be adjusted as necessary to compensate for the time students are not in school on the early release days. Adding 20 minutes to four days during the week will provide staff with an additional 80 minutes per week. When combined with other contractual time, this can result in several hours that can be targeted for professional development activities. Simi-

larly, secondary schools have adopted a schedule that includes a regular delayed opening (i.e., the last Wednesday of every month), when students report an hour or two later than normal. This is particularly effective for focusing on all-staff or interdepartmental issues. While many secondary schools provide time for department planning or meetings, these often occur at the expense of opportunities for schoolwide sessions.

- **Using permanent substitutes** is another strategy schools and districts are exploring in their search for more time. This practice is particularly effective in addressing teachers' concerns about leaving the classroom. When a cadre of permanent substitutes is created, teachers, students, and parents recognize these individuals as a part of the school's team. Permanent substitutes help to ensure a continuous learning pattern for students.

- **Scheduling common planning time** for teachers who share responsibility for the same students, grade level, or content area allows them to use this time for professional growth as well as preparation. This strategy is a common practice in a number of other countries. For example, in Japan, teachers are in the classroom for approximately three or four hours a day and spend the remainder of their time working collaboratively with each other to design, discuss, and perfect lessons. The recent Third International Mathematics and Science Study suggests this practice is one factor contributing to the high science and math achievement levels demonstrated by Japanese students (Peak, 1996).

What Makes Professional Development Ineffective?

Professional development literature over the past three decades provides clear distinctions about what works and what doesn't: This body of extensive research clearly substantiates the ineffectiveness of the all too common one-shot workshop (Fullan & Stielgebauer, 1991). As indicated in Little's (1989) comprehensive examination of professional development practices, a lack of attention to follow-up activities is another factor that contributes to ineffectiveness. Additional barriers include:

- Tendencies toward fads and/or quick-fix solutions
- Overload or too many competing demands
- Lack of attention to site-specific differences
- Teacher turnover
- Failure to allow sufficient time to plan for and learn new strategies
- Attempts to manage by central office staff, rather than provisions to develop capacity and leadership at the school level (Fullan & Stielgebauer, 1991)

Some Alternatives to Short-Term, "One-Size-Fits-All" Workshops

Although there remains a place in a teacher's overall professional development plan for short-term training sessions, a variety of other options exist that can be used to design an effective professional development experience that is sustained and intensive. In addition to a short-term training on a particular topic, a teacher who has identified a specific content-area need could elect to enroll in a college course that would strengthen his or her knowledge in the subject. Summer institutes are another option that can provide indepth opportunities to study and learn new skills and knowledge. The following activities offer additional avenues for teachers' professional growth:

- **Collaborative or action research**, whether conducted individually or in teams, actively engages teachers in designing and pursuing investigations that serve as productive professional development experiences. Teachers pose questions based on district priorities, school goals, or classroom situations. Through the collection and analysis of data, teachers gain useful insights that can inform and shape classroom practices. Although usually tailored to the unique needs of their particular school, the findings and conclusions from the research are often applicable to other sites. Thus, an important aspect of teacher research is the opportunity to share the results with colleagues.

- **Study groups** typically are organized around a particular topic of interest. For example, a group of elementary teachers might decide to read and discuss a variety of sources on the subject of teaching reading. The science teachers at a middle school could form a study group to learn more about how they can improve the school's science fair through the use of inquiry-based teaching. Facilitation of the group can be assigned to one member or rotated on a regular schedule. Typically, study groups examine the topic by reading and discussing current literature, visiting sites where the practice of interest is employed, or attending conferences or classes to gain additional knowledge on the selected topic (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1997).

- **Staff retreats**, a frequent practice among business professionals, offer educators many benefits. A regular, uninterrupted single or multiple-day session provides staff with unique opportunities to develop goals and action plans targeting their specific needs and context. Schools using this strategy report that one of the most significant benefits from regular staff retreats is the progress made in building a spirit of professional community among all staff (Little, 1997). If at all possible, the retreat should be held at a site other than the school building.

- **Scoring student work** samples produced in response to performance assessment tasks offers unique opportunities for professional development. This experience typically is organized around training sessions in how to use scoring guides or rubrics to evaluate an open-ended math problem, writing sample, or oral presentation. Whether structured at the school, district, or state level, this experience not only provides teachers with an opportunity to gain and practice new skills associated with the use of scoring guides, but equally important, it can also engage them in thoughtful conversations with colleagues about standards-based instruction and what characterizes student success. Furthermore, this practice promotes the use of uniform assessment strategies or procedures. These discussions are most productive at the school level, where they can be frequent and ongoing.

- **Planning or work days** provide opportunities for indepth, lengthy discussions of a particular idea or problem. A day devoted to strategizing and developing an approach for action allows teachers to make significant progress toward goals—progress that is often not accomplished in daily or weekly planning times. A slightly different concept than staff retreats, work days typically involve smaller groups focused on a particular task. For example, a team of eighth-grade teachers could use a work day to plan a thematic unit, or the primary teachers at an elementary school could meet in the spring to evaluate the school's multiage grouping policy and to make decisions about the next year's class assignments.

- **School visits** are excellent vehicles for teachers and others who are considering a new approach or strategy to observe what it looks like in "real life." School visits are most informative when there is a close match between the visiting and hosting schools' student population, grade configuration, community expectations, and learning goals. Lessons can be learned by visits to schools in varying stages of implementation. Staff at a school where the strategy has been in place for several years will have a different perspective than those where the innovation is relatively new. Another key component of productive school visits is the opportunity for visiting teachers and staff to have time to ask questions and discuss what they have observed with their hosts. Key questions and things to look for should be considered and determined prior to the visit to ensure efficient use of time.

- **Networks** are often organized around specific content areas. Little (1997) argues that subject-specific collaboratives or networks can be particularly effective in "ensuring that teachers acquire expertise that joins subject knowledge with a solid grasp of pedagogical challenges and possibilities." As more schools are becoming "wired" for Internet and e-mail capabilities, electronic networks and listservs are alternatives to the more traditional face-to-face networks. The exchange of ideas and the ability to tap into the expertise of colleagues across town or on the other side of the country make networks particularly effective professional development opportunities that exemplify the concept of learning communities.

- **Peer coaching and mentoring** "are professional development strategies that provide one-on-one learning opportunities for teachers focused on improving teacher practice" (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1997). The coaching relationship can be fostered through classroom observations, planning instruction, developing materials, or discussing students. Joyce and Showers (1996) report that contrary to what many believe, verbal feedback need not be a part of coaching activities involving classroom observations. The simple act of observing another teacher in action is a professional development experience. While coaching is most often a peer relationship, mentoring typically involves a more experienced teacher paired with a novice. Both coaching and mentoring are activities that focus on strengthening teachers' practice in the environment where it most counts—the classroom. Just as site-based management puts decisionmaking responsibilities in the hands of those most affected by the decisions, coaching and mentoring place professional development at the critical level of the classroom, where it has the potential for a significant impact on students' learning.

Conclusion

The message from research is clear: Effective professional development is intensive and sustained; it occurs through collaborative planning and implementation; and it engages teachers in opportunities that promote continuous inquiry and improvement that is relevant and appropriate to local sites.

Although the lessons from research are explicit, challenges and questions remain. A significant challenge is to put these lessons into action. Many professional development activities simply do not exemplify what we have learned from research. Another, and yet unanswered, question that is the focus of several current investigations is how to better represent and determine the relationship between improved student achievement and professional development activities.

The schools and districts in the "Northwest Sampler" section of this booklet are examples of how some educators have translated the lessons from research into practice. They contribute important insights to the ongoing study of effective professional development.

THE NORTHWEST SAMPLER

On the following pages are descriptions of seven professional development programs. Though the programs are all different in design and scope, each seeks to actively involve teachers in effective professional development. The programs described are located throughout the Northwest. By no means are they meant to represent an exclusive listing of exemplary programs; rather they are just a few of the many excellent examples found in the region and throughout the country. Some have been in existence for several years, while others are fledgling efforts. Some have sought to describe every component of their program, while others wanted to focus on one element alone. Included for each site is location and contact information, a general description of the program, observed outcomes as a result of the program, and tips directly from these educators for others looking to implement similar ideas in their schools.

Location

Jerome School District
107 W. 3rd
Jerome, ID 83338

Contact

Sandra Thompson, Curriculum Coordinator
Phone: 208/324-8528
Fax: 208/324-2599

Description

The Jerome School District is a rural district in south central Idaho with a student population of 3,100. District certified and classified staff total 300. Economically disadvantaged students comprise 56 percent of the district's student population, and 18 percent are members of cultural and ethnic minority groups.

Like many districts, the Jerome School District addresses a variety of topics with its professional development work. Examples include the district improvement plan, curriculum development, basic skills improvement, classroom management, learning styles, and school-to-work programs. Professional development activities can include:

- Inservice days where all teachers participate in specific training activities
- Credited coursework that takes place outside regular school time
- Peer coaching and mentoring that occurs on a one-on-one basis or in small groups
- Support for attending technology and professional development conferences

The district has aggressively pursued technology training as a major emphasis of staff development since the fall of 1995. Technology is viewed as the catalyst for helping teachers change the way they teach, which in turn helps change the way students learn, both in content and in development of higher order skills. The district believes technology has a significant impact on the academic and social growth of economically disadvantaged students, and that without technology, these students often have educational experiences that focus on repetition and drill. Technology tools allow students of all abilities to analyze, evaluate, and communicate information. Therefore, the majority of the district's staff development dollars have been funneled into technology development.

To keep the technology program running smoothly, each school has a Building Technology Committee that is responsible for surveying the needs of teachers and designing a plan to meet these building level needs. In addition, a District Technology Committee, comprised of representatives from each building committee and from the community, was organized to oversee the implementation of the program. This committee is divided into four subcommittees: staff development, curriculum, communications/public relations, and evaluation. These subcommittees work with teachers from each building to make district decisions and recommendations for growth. They also help to encourage consistent technology instruction from building to building and grade to grade.

To help teachers acquire and maintain their technological skills, the district has developed partnerships with two of the state's three public universities and with two private colleges. Training agreements with these postsecondary schools have allowed the Jerome School District to organize a "train the trainer" model, using university personnel to train teachers who in turn train

their peers. Qualified district personnel have designed course content and have been approved as course instructors. This allows the training to be customized to fit the infrastructure of the district's system, and to address the specific needs of students and teachers. Most of the teacher training is held in state-of-the-art computer labs in various school buildings throughout the district. Now in the second year of this training model, the district finds that teachers are successful in guiding the practices of their peers.

It is important to note that follow-up training is the key to ensuring success with new methods of technology teaching. The district encourages teachers to seek out and create technology-rich lessons, using regular curriculum topics, that improve and otherwise enhance learning. District inservice days provide opportunities for teachers who have made exemplary use of technology to share teaching projects with their peers. This sharing strategy has proven to be particularly valuable to teachers who are fearful or uncertain about the possibilities of teaching with the Internet, electronic research databases, or tools software. When they see what their colleagues have done, it helps them realize what a useful resource technology can be.

Each school in the Jerome School District has at least one multimedia computer lab as well as a minimum of one computer in each classroom. More than 75 percent of the classrooms have between three and five computers. The district goal is for each classroom to have a minimum of five computers.

The district uses Windows-based machines and, in addition to content-specific software, has adopted Hyperstudio presentation software and Microsoft software programs for teachers and students. An introduction to the tools software (encompassing spreadsheets, databases, word processing, and presentations)

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began with training in Microsoft Works 3.0. This training progressed as Works 3.0 was upgraded to Works 4.0. Many teachers eventually found the need for the more sophisticated features in the full Microsoft Office Suite software program. Both credit classes and inservice training days are available for teacher training in these software packages. Since the fall of 1995 the district has offered 27 different credit courses in technology. These courses represent approximately 850 college credits earned by more than 82 percent of the district certified staff.

Support for the technology training program comes from the district's general staff development funds. Title II Eisenhower money can also be used for technology training in math and science. In addition, the district has been awarded several large and small grants to supplement training dollars. Some sources of the grant funding are the legislatively approved state competitive technology money, Goals 2000 Technology Funds, National Technology Challenge Grant funds, and State Innovative grant funds. These sources provide supplemental funding vital to the success of the program.

District administrators contribute to the success of the technology staff development program with an aggressive "can do" attitude. This attitude was adopted by administrators and teachers with technological savvy who were instrumental in the development and implementation of the program. These teacher leaders have ensured that their peers continue to be trained to integrate technology into the curriculum.

Increased attention is currently being placed upon evaluating the district's technology program. Unofficial and preliminary reports from teachers indicate that students who are engaged in a variety of activities with intermittent computer use and other equipment, such as digital cameras and scanners, stay motivated for longer

periods of time when compared to students studying without computers. One evaluative study conducted in an elementary social studies classroom reported that students (experimental group) using computers for writing wrote paragraphs with longer, more detailed sentences than those (control group) who used pencil and paper. In addition, test scores (teacher prepared) in the experimental group were 10 percent higher than scores from the control group. Students in the experimental group used higher-level study and research skills, and demonstrated more collaborative skills, than students in the control group.

The district is looking forward to conducting further studies during the fall of 1998. Select teachers will be training with university leaders over the summer to design the studies for fall implementation. The purpose of the studies will be to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning with technology. It is anticipated that the results of these studies will be available in January 1999. Without continued staff development to build confidence in their teaching strategies, these teachers would not be willing to take the risks required to conduct such evaluative studies.

Observed Outcomes

- Preliminary findings indicate that students' academic skills appear to be improving as a result of technology use
- Students are motivated to use technology when developing their assignments
- Teachers are comfortable using technology as a regular teaching and learning tool
- The more equipment and training teachers have, the more they want
- The technology program has provided new opportunities for partnerships with outside organizations

Keys to Success

- Ensure that district leadership supports the effort
- Establish district committees that can oversee different aspects of the program to build staff ownership and ensure it is clearly organized and able to run smoothly
- Evaluate the program regularly to learn what has been accomplished and what still needs to be addressed
- Provide ongoing training and access to technology once teachers and students have had initial training
- Be visionary: administrators and technology leaders should stay six months ahead of teachers in terms of "what is out there"

Location

Coeur d' Alene School District
311 N. 10th Street
Coeur d' Alene, ID 83814

Contact

Judy Drake, Director of Staff and Community Resources
or
Hazel Bauman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Phone: 208/664-8243
Fax: 208/664-1748

Description

Professional development at the nine elementary schools in the Coeur d' Alene School District is a little different this year. Thanks to a three-year grant from the Albertson's Foundation, the district has designed a unique teacher leader professional development program that seeks to continually improve teaching and learning opportunities. It is both continuous and long term—two characteristics the district felt it was lacking since the state mandates only two professional development days per school year.

First, a lead teacher from each elementary school was identified through an intensive application and interview process. To be selected, applicants had to be endorsed by their building principal, demonstrate exemplary teaching characteristics as outlined in the National Board of Professional Teaching standards national certification requirements, and successfully complete an interview with a group of their peers, administrators, parents, and other school staff. If an acceptable candidate was not found in a school, that school would have gone without a teacher leader.

the district was not willing to settle for someone who did not meet all of the criteria. The selected teacher leaders are paid a stipend in addition to their normal salaries. Lead teachers are required to take a six-credit class on literacy support. Most of them hold a master's degree, and several are affiliate faculty at local universities, where they teach reading and literacy classes.

Next, the district hired a teacher intern for each elementary building. The interns, all certified first-year teachers, are paid two-thirds the normal beginning salary because they do not have their own class. Instead, they team teach with the building's lead teacher. They assume total class responsibilities for only about 20 percent of the school day. During this time, the lead teacher is able to move into other classrooms to provide training, modeling, and technical assistance.

To effectively facilitate professional development, all nine lead teachers come together once a month to discuss and plan activities for the coming month. In addition, they meet for two weeks prior to the start of school to plan and coordinate staff development opportunities and strategies—all with improved student achievement as the goal. Though the overall theme for the three-year grant period is literacy, the team of lead teachers designates a different literacy focus at each monthly meeting. Lead teachers provide assistance on an as-requested basis, but have no difficulty keeping busy—they are always in demand. It is emphasized that their role is not that of evaluator, but rather one of peer support. Examples of some of the many activities they conduct with teachers include book studies, watch and guide video lessons, observe and analyze lessons, lesson modeling, team teaching, and focused work with individual students. Sometimes, the lead teachers also conduct whole school trainings.

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To monitor the model, the teacher leaders collect student achievement data in the fall and spring in the areas of reading, writing, spelling, and math. Conclusions are based on the class assessments in place at each elementary school and on the results from the annual Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Program changes or refinements are rooted in this monitoring process, as well as in the reactions and suggestions from building teachers.

The benefits of this professional development program are threefold: (1) teachers benefit from easy access to expert professional development assistance; (2) first-year teachers get an exceptional opportunity to practice under a master teacher; and (3) students who may be more demanding and need extra attention can be in a classroom staffed with two certified teachers.

Observed Outcomes

- Teachers appreciate having an onsite "expert" available to them at all times who doesn't evaluate them or threaten them in any way
- First-year teacher interns are better trained and more capable of taking on their own class than they would have been without the internship experience
- Students in the lead teachers' classes benefit from having two certified teachers
- Teachers' skills are enhanced by ongoing development activities

Keys to Success

- Use a rigorous process to identify and select lead teachers who are highly qualified and respected

- Select teacher interns who have been successful in student teaching but were unable or not ready to assume full-time teaching; this is not a remedial year for student teachers who were unsuccessful
- Ensure that building-level administration supports the program
- Work to find a way to sustain the program long term

Location

Cherry Valley School (grades K-4)
111 4th Avenue E.
Polson, MT 59860

Contact

Elaine Meeks, Principal
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Fax: 406/883-6332

Description

For nine years, a simple philosophy has driven professional development at Cherry Valley School in Polson, Montana. According to this philosophy, professional development should be systematic, comprehensive, and focused. The school has created a program with literacy as the foundation of the entire curriculum. The goal at Cherry Valley is to build a school culture of inquiry and reflectivity that is focused on continuously improving learning and teaching. Improving student outcomes is the basis of everything the school does.

Three objectives guide the professional development efforts at Cherry Valley. The entire school staff seeks to:

1. Share a consistent and unified theory of learning
2. Provide instruction that has continuity from year to year and emphasizes practice driven by understanding
3. Create a learning environment that fosters lifelong learners

Professional development is an inclusive process at Cherry Valley, involving the principal, teachers, paraprofessionals, and on occasion, parents and community members. Teaming is widely

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used in all activities. All staff are equally valued, and high expectations are set for everyone at the school (students, paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators alike). Key to maintaining an environment where professional development opportunities are embraced is the practice of intentionally strengthening the resiliency of all staff members. Every staff member has multiple opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the school learning community. Teachers know that risktaking is encouraged and that they are in an environment that supports them in all they do. This climate of trust and support is conveyed to the children and manifested in the school's positive environment.

Cross-age learning activities are evident throughout the school, as teachers regularly "buddy" with each other to collaborate on their teaching. Many schoolwide activities are held every year, including a multicultural festival and a literacy fair that involve all students, staff, parents, and the community. Social competence is valued as an important learning outcome for students. Starting in kindergarten, and continuing throughout their education at Cherry Valley, students learn to solve problems peacefully and positively. This is modeled through staff interactions.

Commitment to professional development is shown through the variety of activities the staff is involved in at any one time. The school's professional development activities include:

- A comprehensive professional library
- Common planning times for teachers in the same grade level
- A monthly study group that investigates different educational issues (participation in the group is voluntary)
- Three-hour workshops that happen during early release periods 12 times a year; these focus on improving practice according to current research and recommendations

- Frequent reviews of current educational literature
- Biweekly staff meetings set aside for "faculty sharing" (the teacher who hosts the meeting in his or her classroom is responsible for determining an education topic or an example of a practice to discuss or share)
- Mandatory participation on fall, winter, or spring school planning teams (these teams plan all of the schoolwide activities for that period)

This variety of opportunities for professional development serve to engage all members of the school community in learning each year.

Observed Outcomes

- Teachers teach kids, not curriculum materials (student needs coupled with research drive instruction)
- Teachers increasingly seek new learning opportunities
- Students exhibit increased social competency as well as improved academic performance
- Teachers can articulate why they do what they do in their teaching
- School leadership does not rest with one or two individuals—it is shared among the entire staff
- An increased sense of professionalism is reflected in staff conversations, the reading materials they choose, and the materials that are displayed on the walls

Keys To Success

- Ensure that the professional development program is focused, systematic, and comprehensive

- Approach teaching and learning from a strength-based position, believing that everyone is a learner and has unique strengths
- Provide supports that address identified challenges
- Design specific professional development activities together as a staff
- Address staff understanding of learning theory before expecting changes in practice

Location

McKinley Elementary School
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Contact

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Description

Community partnerships and volunteer opportunities are an effective way of bringing parents and the community into schools. They can help all stakeholders develop a keen understanding of the roles each plays, they can maximize resources that otherwise might not have been used, and most importantly, such relationships can enhance education for children. Of course, none of this is possible without the cooperation and participation of teachers. This is acknowledged at McKinley Elementary School, where many community and volunteer outreach programs are sustained by appropriate teacher training.

On an ongoing basis, ways to involve parents and other community volunteers are identified. The kinds or degrees of teacher training that take place depend on the task that the volunteers are needed for. The training, provided by district and building specialists, can be simple or complex. Appropriate training enables teachers to effectively:

- Collaborate with all members of the educational team
- Aid volunteers in carrying out effective student management strategies

- Provide appropriate student discipline if needed
- Coordinate with the specialists to monitor, supervise, and evaluate student growth toward their individual goals and objectives
- Inform and involve parents in all aspects of the volunteer program

Programs such as HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) and the America Reads Challenge that rely heavily on outside volunteers can succeed at McKinley due to the school's collaborative teaming philosophy. This means that teachers and volunteers are trained together, collaboratively. When this happens, a shared responsibility develops among all members of the collaborative team for each child's learning. Each goes away being taught exactly what the other was taught. To work effectively in collaborative teams, teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers are trained in the areas of communication, problem solving, decisionmaking, resolution of differences, self-assertion, integration, and self-control. In addition, teachers on staff are trained as volunteer trainers.

Observed Outcomes

- The development of the teaming approach to problem solving has resulted in better communication between the school staff and the community
- Fewer students are being overlooked because more adults, working as a team, are involved at the school
- Students' classroom performance has improved

Keys to Success

- Support a team philosophy that allows team members to share responsibility for all students' learning; that encourages an open, honest atmosphere; and that gives them a shared ownership in the planning process
- Work to make sure all team members understand the importance of being flexible
- Develop specific policies and procedures regarding the programs being implemented
- Focus portions of the training on effective teaming between teachers and volunteers
- Ensure that the program is organized to allow for effective communication among the administration, teachers, and volunteers

Location

Willamette Curriculum Coalition (WCC)
Willamette Education Service District
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Contact

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Description

The Willamette Curriculum Coalition (WCC), established in 1993, is a consortium for professional development and school improvement. It is comprised of the Willamette Education Service District (ESD) and 13 school districts, which include 70 schools, approximately 1,200 teachers, and 21,000 students. Membership in the coalition is voluntary. WCC is supported by the Willamette ESD, annual membership dues, and grants and contracts. A leadership team of teachers, principals, curriculum directors, and superintendents representing each member district guides the coalition's work.

WCC brings together ideas, people, and resources across its member districts to enhance standards-based school improvement. Professional development is at the core of this collaborative venture. The coalition's work is based upon two key premises:

1. By working together on a regional basis, school districts can more effectively help students reach high standards

2. Teachers need to play a central role in designing and leading professional development programs to assure that the *programs have quality, authenticity, and relevance*

WCC has recruited and supported a cadre of accomplished teacher leaders from the region to provide collegial, interactive professional development programs related to Oregon's standards-based learning and assessment system. In any given year, between 300 and 500 teachers participate in the coalition's regional professional development programs, in which teachers come together at central locations for institutes, courses, workshops, or informal colleague-exchange networks. An equal number of teachers participate in onsite local professional development programs, led by members of the teacher training cadre, that typically involve one-day workshops and follow-up training.

The teacher leader cadre consists of two levels of trainers. *Senior trainers*, who constitute the first level, are the most seasoned and distinguished teacher leaders from the region. They not only lead professional development programs, but also serve as mentors for new teacher trainers in the cadre. Senior trainers must go through a formal application process. Currently, there are only four senior trainers in the coalition. In addition to the senior trainers are the *regular trainers*. These are skilled teacher leaders nominated by their district, or by other teachers in WCC schools, based upon their success as trainers or their potential for success. There are currently eight regular trainers in the coalition.

All trainers have indepth knowledge of standards-based teaching, learning, and assessment practices, and are continually extending their knowledge through service on statewide committees, participation in professional development conferences and associations, and collegial planning, problem solving, and

product development work sponsored by the coalition. All teacher leaders are paid for their services at rates set by the coalition's Leadership Team.

Observed Outcomes

- WCC-conducted studies and surveys indicate that most participating teachers have applied significant concepts and tools from coalition training programs to their teaching
- Action research studies have documented gains in student learning that appear to be systematically related to new or refined practices that stem from professional development activities

Keys to Success

- Tie professional development to broader school improvement themes and goals related to student learning
- Identify goals that all member districts hold in common and can collectively embrace; keep them front and center in planning, reviewing, and evaluating professional development programs
- Recruit, value, and conscientiously support teachers as designers and leaders of professional development programs
- Develop a broadly representative planning and decision-making team to ensure that the overall design and implementation of professional development programs match what schools and teachers need

Location

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Contact

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Description

Professional development in the Lake Washington School District is a critical component of the district culture. Of the many professional development activities that happen in the 40-school district, three initiatives highlight their efforts. They all reinforce the district's commitment to quality professional development that reflects state standards. Following is a brief description of each:

- **Research and Development Team.** The Lake Washington School District has designed an action research plan that couples current reform efforts in Washington state with the need for a structure that supports all students regardless of their postgraduation plans. The critical question being researched is, "What is the purpose and function of high school?" The plan, called "Level 5," refers to the district's fifth level of curriculum that focuses on grades 11 and 12. In addition to a commission composed of a variety of stakeholders who oversee the development process, Level 5 has a research and development team that works to establish instructional recommendations. The team consists of a group of teachers representing every high school in the district.

Their recommendations address performance expectations for students, high school graduation requirements, schooling structures, and course/class alignment issues.

- **New Teacher Institute.** Recognizing the difficulties faced by novice teachers or teachers new to a district, the district offers a weeklong New Teacher Institute each summer and five days of follow-up mentoring and training throughout the year. All teachers new to the district are required to attend the week-long summer institute where, among other educational topics, they learn to (1) recognize the relationship between the district vision, the student profile, and an effective classroom; (2) develop an understanding of effective practices of classroom organization and instructional planning; (3) create practical applications of effective practices to implement in classrooms; and (4) create student-centered classrooms. Activities at the institute are facilitated by 10 staff development trainers and include presentations from professional trainers and veteran teachers, who share what they wish someone would have told them when they first started teaching.

- **Technology Immersion Training.** For many years, the Lake Washington School District offered teachers technology training that addressed various educational computer applications. Though helpful, it didn't adequately address the biggest obstacle to successful use of technology in the classroom—knowing how to integrate technology with current curriculum. Based on a model observed in another district, a 1997 summer training focused on helping teachers learn how technology could be used to complement their daily instruction. The seven-day immersion experience provided teachers with very basic instruction in several software applications, and then released them to create group projects using the technology. Trainers modeled instructional and classroom management strategies, did additional training as

groups needed, and incorporated a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate each step of the project development. Participants also had time to reflect at each step of the process, relating back to their own classroom situations. The most important aspect of the training was its design, which sought to tie technology to the district's curriculum frameworks. The technology was merely a tool to enhance teachers' abilities to make helpful connections. The 35 participants of the 1997 training returned to their schools armed with a new computer, new expertise, and an expectation that they would provide technical assistance to their colleagues. A levy passed in 1998 will allow for expansion of the Technology Immersion Training. Over the next four years, it is planned that all the district's teachers will participate in this experience.

Observed Outcomes

- In 1996 the district received an award from the state Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) for its various professional development programs
- Teachers support the district's professional development efforts and see them as an investment in the future

Keys to Success

- Provide teachers with hands-on and relevant training activities
- Complement current reform efforts with professional development activities
- Base professional development activities and instructional recommendations on current educational research

Location

Bethel School District
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Contact

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Description

Professional development in the Bethel School District is distinct in two ways: (1) it is intricately tied to district and state reform work, and (2) all activities that are offered are provided by district specialists who share the district's vision and goals. For six years the district has worked to develop a professional development program that trains select teachers to be expert trainers in their schools, instead of relying on outside experts. Each of the district's 21 schools, plus a large early childhood program, participates in the program.

Based on the district's Performance Learning Program (a multifaceted guide to their reform efforts) and standardized assessment data, each school identifies strategic plan goals at the start of every school year. These goals become the foundation of the school's professional development efforts throughout the year. Stipend-paid teacher trainers provide the bulk of professional development training. These trainers give support to their colleagues in a variety of ways. Currently, every school has five trainers, each specializing in one of the following areas:

- **Strategic planning.** The strategic planning trainer works to guide staff in data collection, analysis, and interpretation for improved student learning.
- **Assessment.** The assessment trainer provides guidance and inservice to staff in interpreting and using student test results, preparing students for tests, creating and implementing classroom performance assessments, coordinating performance assessments for writing and math, and working to align curriculum across grade levels/disciplines.
- **Community involvement.** The community involvement trainer specializes in designing and implementing parent/community involvement activities and providing real-world learning connections.
- **Diverse learning.** The diverse learning needs trainer guides staff in adapting curriculum, instruction, and performance assessments for all learners.
- **Technology**. The technology trainer specializes in training other teachers in how to successfully integrate technology into daily instruction and culminating projects.

In addition to the previous trainers, all secondary buildings have an applied learning trainer who shows teachers how to integrate the rigor and relevance of the real world into all academic goals and training. The focus for trainers is the effective facilitation of school strategic plan goals and the state goals in order to improve student learning.

Trainers are selected at the building level and are funded with district staff development funds and categorical funding from special programs. They are trained by district specialists. Each school trainer serves a minimum of two years and can then be reselected for another two-year term by the school's site council. Trainers' duties include:

- Instructing classes and providing support coaching throughout the school year within their building
- Providing targeted instruction at districtwide Learning Improvement Days (inservice days)
- Cooperating with the district's Instructional Division to select appropriate staff training activities and to gather data to determine if the activities are improving student learning

As the state of Washington has moved into educational reform, the Bethel School District has aligned their essential learnings, benchmarks, rubrics, and content frameworks to match state change efforts. Trainers work with staff to promote these changes and to prepare staff and students for a new state criterion-reference assessment system.

Observed Outcomes

- Teachers have an increased sense of professionalism
- In a survey of all district certificated employees, 86 percent of respondents felt that the professional development program provides professional growth, and 84 percent felt that the program connects with the district's strategic planning efforts
- In the past, teachers felt bogged down by sporadic, disconnected professional development activities that never had adequate follow-up and thus never truly affected classroom instruction—they now have a coherent, unified direction

Keys to Success

- Ensure that district leaders and the school board support any proposed changes and share the vision

- Ensure that district leaders are committed to listening to practitioners and building leaders, and will make adjustments based on stated needs
- Use trainers and specialists from within the district
- Enlist the help of highly trained administrators who are committed to continuous improvement of student learning
- Train teachers in action research methods
- Use technology that can provide useful data about student learning and parent/staff opinions on implementation

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